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One Hundred Eighth Congress
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DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

December 8, 2003

The Honorable Clark Kent Ervin
Department of Homeland Security
Office of Inspector General
1120 Vermont Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Ervin:

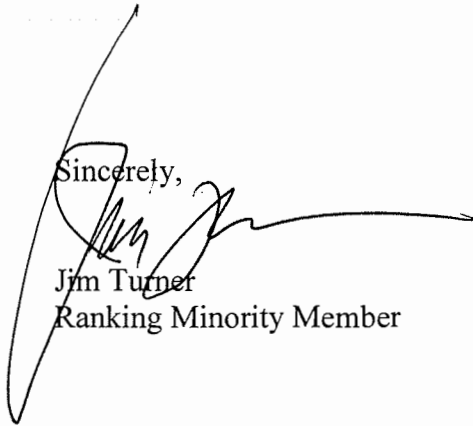
As you may know, I have tasked my staff to review our government's ability to prevent the smuggling of a nuclear weapon or a radiological dispersal device (RDD) into the United States. As part of that work, they are in the process of reviewing the policies and procedures of the Department of Homeland Security to identify and then interdict "high risk" commercial shipping containers.

Accordingly, we were concerned by recent revelations made by ABC News on September 11, 2003, concerning their apparent successful smuggling of depleted uranium from Jakarta, Indonesia into the United States through the Port of Los Angeles. Their story raises a number of issues concerning the effectiveness of the processes and procedures used by the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection to properly identify such a container and then to successfully inspect it.

Given the seriousness of the threat from nuclear terrorism, I would request that your office conduct an inquiry into the facts surrounding the ABC News report. In particular, I would appreciate receiving from you a detailed description of the facts surrounding this shipment and what, if any, lessons can be learned as a result of it.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact John F. Sopko, Chief of Investigations for my staff, at 202-226-8833, who is assisting me in this inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Turner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jim Turner
Ranking Minority Member